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**Universidad del Salvador**  
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**Escuela de Lenguas Modernas**

**Doctoral Dissertation**

**Birth and Continuity of a Bilingual Project in the First Fringe of the Province of  
Buenos Aires**

**(A School Project Conducted at San Joaquin School in Villa Ballester)**

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### **Thesis Abstract**

The main aim of this case-based-research is to relate the experience of having adopted and adapted a foreign model of bilingual education in a suburban city of the Province of Buenos Aires, known by the name of Villa Ballester.

San Joaquin, a school set up in this locality, started its bilingual project after the school had gone through 13 years of monolingual mainstream education, offering intensive extracurricular English courses, three times a week. The year 1989 marked the beginning of the first stage of the bilingual project, which extended down to 2000. No matter the adaptations introduced, which were indeed necessary, the project, by 1996 began to show the need of amendments in order to reach expected standards of project continuity. That was why, the second stage, starting by 2001 set itself to adopting and adapting Enriched Education Critical Features in an attempt to imbue the bilingual project in force with new tools for insuring not only improvement but also refining, and with refining, the possibility of optimising the project for long-term commitment, as originally planned.

As of 2001 to the present, many lessons have been learnt and set in motion, and San Joaquin School has gradually been able to show a bilingual project with ample community support and firm evidence of project continuity.

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## Thesis Index

<b>Research Questions: The Seeds of Research Work.....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Layout of Thesis Organization.....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Chapter I.....</b>	<b>15</b>
Bilingualism from an Individual and Societal Perspective .....	15
Bilingualism in Individuals.....	15
Bilingualism in Society .....	24
Languages and their Distribution .....	26
Monolingual Countries .....	26
Bilingual Countries.....	28
Multilingual Countries.....	30
Conclusion .....	32
<b>Chapter II.....</b>	<b>34</b>
Bilingualism in Argentina: Gains and Losses.....	34
Colonization .....	34
Immigration .....	36
The English .....	38
The Scottish.....	41
The Welsh .....	41
The Irish.....	43
Early Bilingual Schools that Still Continue in the System .....	52
Conclusion .....	55
<b>Chapter III.....</b>	<b>56</b>
What is Enriched Education (EE)?.....	56
1. Parent Involvement .....	58
A Student-Centred Approach.....	59
Strong Leadership .....	59
Additive Bilingualism.....	60
Reflective Teaching.....	61
Challenging Academic Instruction.....	62
Cross Articulation Inside and Outside School .....	63
A Programme with High Standards .....	63
Developmentally Appropriate Programming.....	65
Leadership .....	65
Action Research.....	68
Organizational Assessment.....	71
Conclusion .....	76
<b>Chapter IV.....</b>	<b>77</b>
Research Methodology.....	77
Field Research Methodology .....	77
Research Instruments .....	79
Planning Field Research .....	79
Aim:.....	80
Educational Institution Involved.....	80
Observation as Regards the Population Studied.....	81

Conclusions .....	81
<b>Chapter V.....</b>	<b>82</b>
<b>San Joaquin School: A Bilingual Project in the Province of Buenos Aires.....</b>	<b>82</b>
The Former and Present Organizational Layout of the Province of Buenos Aires.....	83
The Closer Context: Villa Ballester .....	87
San Joaquin – A New School in Villa Ballester .....	88
Phase One (1976-1988): The novelty of Intensive English Lessons at School .....	88
Phase Two (1989-2000): The Bilingual Project (Stage 1) .....	89
Phase Three (2001- 2013): Bilingual Project (Stage 2) .....	94
<b>Conclusion .....</b>	<b>97</b>
<b>Chapter VI.....</b>	<b>98</b>
<b>EE Critical Features at San Joaquin Kindergarten Level.....</b>	<b>98</b>
General Considerations: .....	98
Critical Features in San Joaquin kindergarten Section .....	100
Parent Involvement.....	100
A Student-Centred Approach .....	103
Strong Leadership.....	106
Additive Bilingualism .....	107
Reflective Teaching.....	108
Challenging Academic Instruction.....	112
Cross Articulation Inside and Outside School.....	113
Appendix.....	116
<b>Chapter VII.....</b>	<b>118</b>
<b>EE Critical Features at San Joaquin Primary School Level.....</b>	<b>118</b>
General Considerations: .....	118
Critical Features in San Joaquin Primary School Section.....	120
Parent Involvement.....	120
A Student -Centred Approach .....	122
Strong Leadership.....	125
Additive Bilingualism .....	126
Reflective Teaching.....	127
Challenging Academic Instruction.....	129
7. Cross Articulation Inside and Outside School.....	131
A Programme with High Standards .....	132
Appendix: .....	56
<b>Chapter VIII.....</b>	<b>136</b>
<b>EE Critical Features at San Joaquin Secondary School Level.....</b>	<b>136</b>
General Considerations: .....	136
5Curriculum integration at San Joaquin School.....	137
Critical Features in San Joaquin Secondary School Section .....	140
Parent Involvement.....	140
A Student-Centred Approach .....	141
Strong Leadership.....	142
Additive Bilingualism .....	143
Reflective Teaching.....	143
Challenging Academic Instruction.....	147
7. Cross Articulation Inside and Outside School.....	150
8. A Programme with High Standards .....	152

NB: Next in the Appendix that follows we will display Evaluation forms in their corresponding formats of common use at San Joaquin School in the three levels above described. ....153

<b>Appendix .....</b>	<b>154</b>
<b>Chapter IX.....</b>	<b>164</b>
<b>Comparative analysis 1990-2001 and 2001-2012-.....</b>	<b>164</b>
Report N° 1.....	164
Results:.....	164
<b>Conclusion: .....</b>	<b>168</b>
<b>Analysis of Surveys Administered to Teaching Staff 2000-2006-2012 .....</b>	<b>170</b>
Interpretation of data yielded from both studies .....	182
<b>Enrolment Evolution During the Second Period .....</b>	<b>184</b>
<b>Conclusion .....</b>	<b>185</b>
<b>Bibliography .....</b>	<b>188</b>



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## **TABLES and GRAPHS**

Graph 1 -Exportations –Importations in the River Plate (Lobato - Suriano, 2000, p. 204). .....	39
Graph 2 - Railways (Lobato - Suriano, 2000, p.269) .....	40
Graph 3 - Wool Exports (Lobato - Suriano, 2000, p.275) .....	47
Heritage Schools: a Legacy from the Immigrants .....	50
English as a Global Language Crystal's Circles .....	52
EE Critical Features and their Aims .....	57
The Action Research Cycle.....	70
Source: Lusthaus et al. (2002) variables in Organisational Assessment.....	72
Organisational Assessment Mezzardi's adapted Table of questions .....	75
Enrolment distribution in province of Buenos Aires .....	83
Source: REDES (Argentina Educational Consulting Organization) 2007.....	85
Distribution of bilingual schools by area in the Province of BS AS .....	86
Percentage of time allocation for each language .....	92
Valuable Information yielded by the SWOT Matrix by the end of 1999. ....	95
Kindergarten Parents' Profile 2010.....	101
Kindergarten Teachers' Profile 2010.....	110
GRAPH 1 Objectives of early learning of English .....	118
Lower Forms Timetable Sample .....	119
Upper Forms Timetable Sample .....	119
*(FP) Fluency Programme *(RP) Reading Programme .....	119
Art Activity 2010; home participation .....	121
Concert 2012; 1st form performance .....	121
Example of a Sociogram Conducted in the Primary School Section (2nd Form, 2010) .....	123



Primary School Teachers' Profile 2010 .....	128
Lab. Experience 2008; Science teacher guiding experiment. ....	130
Dali Exhibition 2007; guided visit to the museum .....	131
1 <sup>st</sup> Year Course Timetable .....	137
2 <sup>nd</sup> Year Course Timetable .....	137
3 <sup>rd</sup> and 4 <sup>th</sup> Year Course Timetable .....	138
5 <sup>th</sup> Year Course Timetable .....	139
Secondary School Teachers' Profile 2010 .....	145
2006 Forum on Education in Argentina .....	149
Table 1 summarises the information: .....	165
Table 1: Students year-by-year -1990-2001 .....	165
Graph 1 .....	166
Table 3: Students per year - 2001-2012 .....	166
Graph 3 .....	167
Cumulative Survival .....	169
Programme Assessment Checklist .....	171
<b>Chart 1</b> shows the maximum number of surveys conducted per school section at primary and secondary school level .....	173
Graph 1 .....	174
Graph 2 .....	174
Graph 3 .....	174
Graph 4 .....	175
Graph 5 .....	176
Graph 6 .....	176
Graph 7 .....	176
Graph 8 .....	177

Chart 1 shows the maximum number of surveys carried out per year and per school section. ....	178
Graph 1.....	178
Graph 2.....	179
Graph 3.....	179
Graph 4.....	179
Graph 5.....	180
Graph 6.....	181
Graph 7.....	181
Graph 8.....	181
Enrolment Evolution 2001 - 2012 .....	184



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## THESIS HYPOTHESES

The two hypotheses of this thesis are to be related to the first and second stage of the San Joaquin bilingual project, and for this reason, expected to focus attention on the problems and/or proposals of each stage, respectively.

Hypothesis 1: The bilingual project implemented between 1989- 2000 calls for adjustments in order to gain, general acceptance and project support by the school community as a long-term asset. The challenge we are presented with is finding out why, in spite of the steps taken in search of solutions, improved permanence in the programme has not yet been accomplished.

Hypothesis 2: The bilingual project implemented between 2001-2012 admits having adopted and adapted enriching voices from abroad with the aim of improving and optimising student permanence levels; the problem before us, then, is finding out if the incorporation of Enriched Education Critical Features into the school bilingual programme, all along mainstream education, has succeeded in improving student permanence in the programme, and additionally, as side effect, annual enrolment figures.

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## Research Questions: The Seeds of Research Work

Research work hardly ever, if ever emerges by itself; there is always something that stirs it up. Researchers do not speak of a cause leading to research; they prefer to speak of a "problem" arousing research. The problem, which for quite a good number of reasons has called our attention usually, gives rise to a series of questions that we pose before us, and generally call "research questions. " In this thesis, we will call them the seeds of research work, for they are the initiators of a process of germination that ends up by providing us with the hypothesis or the hypotheses our thesis will set out to validate.

In our case, we have not been an exception to the rule, and have often asked ourselves questions which have necessarily had to do with the adoption of the bilingual education model chosen and its adaptation to the context and the community addressed; the following list of questions have accompanied us all along these years since 1989 down to the present:

1. If, as the rule goes, adoptions are followed by adaptations when an educational model is borrowed- something we have so far done-, why is a decrease in the student permanence rate worrying us at the moment?
2. What other adaptations do we have to introduce in the bilingual model adopted and adapted so that it can succeed in keeping the new context satisfactorily served?
3. If new voices in the field seem to provide us with a solution to the problem of insuring students' long-term permanence in the programme, which further adoptions and adaptations will have to be introduced for the problem to be solved?
4. Besides increasing student permanence levels in the school project, what other benefits favouring the continuity of the project can be expected?

The answers to these questions have been summed up and made to conform the two hypotheses of the present thesis. To their validation, we mean to devote all our time and effort as of now on.

## **Layout of Thesis Organization**

**Thesis General Objective:** To explore, analyse and report the experience of shifting from monolingual to bilingual education in Villa Ballester, a suburban city of the Province of Buenos Aires.

**Thesis Specific Objective:** To compare and contrast student permanence levels in the bilingual programme in stages 1 and 2 of the field research encouraged, and evaluate outcomes.

## **Thesis Structure**

**Introduction:** Research questions viewed as seeds of research

### **Field Literature**

Chapter I: Bilingualism in individuals and in society; globalisation and the evolution from subtractive to additive bilingualism.

Chapter II: Bilingual education in Argentina as a response to colonisation and immigration. Traces of British Heritage Schools in what we today call “Colegios Bilingües”.

Chapter III: Enriched Education as conceived by Cloud, Genesee and Hamayan (Vancouver 2000): a bilingual proposal with nine pillars recognised as Critical Features, and Leadership, Action Research and Organisational Assessment as main constituents.

### **History of School Birth and Evolution**

Chapter IV: San Joaquin School: an ordinary monolingual school which shifts to bilingual schooling after the model of Heritage Schools as of 1989, and then, to an Enriched Education bilingual proposal as of 2001, and in both cases, facing the challenges the shifts involve

Chapter V: EE critical features at San Joaquin kindergarten level.

Chapter VI: EE critical features at San Joaquin primary school level.

Chapter VII: EE critical features at San Joaquin secondary school level.

## **Field Research Methodology**

Chapter VIII: The research sources techniques and instruments used in the two stages of the study approached.

Chapter IX: Comparative study of Stages1 and 2 of the bilingual project with the focus on students' permanence in the bilingual programme, study completed by the inclusion of the analysis of teacher surveys carried out in 2000, 2006 and 2012.

Conclusion: Close examination of the relation between thesis hypotheses and research conclusions followed by some final remark on bilingual education as seen today.



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## Chapter I

### **Bilingualism from an Individual and Societal Perspective**

In our contemporary society, bilingualism or the use of more than one language in one and the same community is an extended phenomenon due to multiple circumstances. The globalisation process and the increase in the production and use of more sophisticated everyday technology seem to be the two most common causes, as they both force us to acknowledge and face an interconnected world in which human beings have developed a new need represented by the necessity to communicate, either optionally or compulsory in more than one language.

As researchers into the topic, with our interest set on education, we have studied in depth the multiple aspects of bilingualism in individuals and in community groups. Such a background behind is necessary for designing a comprehensive and sustainable bilingual school programme for a community group in need of one, or looking forward to one.

### **Bilingualism in Individuals**

Man has from the very beginning of civilisation lived in groups, not by himself or in isolation. These groups were, in the course of time, firstly known as clans or tribes or families, secondly as communities and/or societies, and thirdly as countries or nations geographically and socio-politically located on the map of the world. This explains why those who have looked and still look at bilingualism from an individual perspective do not look worried or troubled when other colleagues, mainly those from the 70's onwards, say that bilingualism is a complex, multidimensional and open-ended phenomenon. There has been a tendency since then to look at the phenomenon from a societal perspective, yet, with no attempt at disregarding the individual perspective in the analysis of the issue. Mela Sarkar (2010)<sup>1</sup> does not fear to report that bilingualism is an “on-going struggle.” What she actually means is that the absence of consensus or agreement on the topic should not trouble us, for the

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<sup>1</sup> Mela Sarkar is a professor of second language education at McGill University Faculty of Education.

important thing is the constant flow of contributions with the stress sometimes on the individual, sometimes on society, and sometimes on both.

Our main concern now is to analyse bilingualism in individuals. This stance on bilingualism was the one the 20<sup>th</sup> century opened with, and probably, the first one to gain a place in the academic ground. In 1913, Jules Ronjat,<sup>2</sup> French linguist, described the French-German bilingual evolution of his son, Louis. The child in those days, as most children still do, lived with his parents in the same home, and had a father who spoke to him in French, and a mother who did the same, but in German. More than twenty years had to pass before we could hear of a similar experience as told by Leopold, a recognized German phonetician. In his case, he recorded the German-English evolution of his daughter Hildegard (1939-1949). The main characteristic of these two studies is that they are both permeated by the "one person-one language" stance. However, in Leopold's report, we can find interesting references to the effect of language shift and language dominance in the evolution of a person's bilingual development. In 1995, Milroy & Muysken edit the following information as regards this case: "When Hildegard went to spend holidays with her grandparents in Germany, her German became stronger, and when she returned to the US and attended school, language dominance passed on to English again. In her mid-teens, however, she was most of the time reluctant to speak German." (p.7)

This information clearly brings to the forefront environmental aspects such as the country, the region and the town or city where they lived or visited when on holiday as well as individual aspects such as myself and the medium, myself and peers and myself and the close family.

In 1927, Bloomfield, American linguist, laid the paradigm that being bilingual implied a native-like control of two or more languages. This was so, because in those days, the monolingual view of languages was the norm. Bilinguals were idealistically conceived as two monolinguals in one person with perfect use of two or more languages. Users who were not totally fluent and precise, as non-native speakers usually are, were considered limited and regarded as poor language users. This

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<sup>2</sup> He asked the French linguist Maurice Grammont advice as to how to bring up his child bilingual



linguistic appreciation was, and is still known, as the theory of “the monolingual mind-set”. Its direct influence could then be seen in the emergence of a subtractive view of bilingualism, which advocated assimilation of the majority language and gradual ignorance of the heritage or family language (phenomenon recognized as language loss) typical in minority language groups, mostly indigenous peoples and immigrants.

In 1953 Uriel Weinreich in his book Languages in Contact- findings and problems states: “In the present study, two or more languages will be said to be IN CONTACT if they are used alternatively by the same persons.” His contribution assumes the complexity of the bilingual phenomenon and offers a detailed analysis of the different aspects involved in bilingualism. He introduces the typology of “coordinate” and “compound” bilinguals, the first category being those who maintain both languages in separate systems, and the second, those who keep both systems under one common mental representation. Yet, Weinreich dares to speak of a third category, the one he calls “subordinate bilinguals.”

Examples, which analyse and categorize bilinguals according to Weinreich:

- 1) A person who has acquired two languages in separate settings, for instance, Spanish in Mexico and English in California- is a coordinate bilingual.
- 2) A person who can use more than one language in the same setting, for instance, Spanish and Guaraní interchangeably in Paraguay is a compound bilingual.
- 3) A person who represents L2 in terms of L1 is a subordinate bilingual, for instance, an English-speaking person, saying in Spanish, “Te llamo para atrás” (Call you back) when what he means to say is, “Te llamo luego o después.”

The one main finding made by Weinreich has been the presence of interference at different levels with the corresponding identification or categorization of the interference as phonic, lexical, grammatical and psychological. Not content with the aspects studied, he next passes on to consider the social sphere, recommending a multidimensional approach to the study of bilinguals. With this direct reference to conditioning factors outside the inner self of an individual, we cannot but see a timid

though sensible shift from the individual to the social sphere, a shift that ends up by enriching rather than weakening the analysis.

Richard Tucker and Wallace Lambert's 1960 account comes to reinforce what we have just said above. Some years before the 60's, these two scholars decided to carry out research on a group of bilingual children, opting for the individual perspective, the one in use in those days. The findings had not been favourable and they were really disappointed. Time went by, and at some point of the decade, with the changes in language teaching in progress, they decided to do research into their former failure, and when published, they admitted having made a mistake years before: they had failed to consider the socio-economic sphere of the subjects involved. The limitations of the prevalent monolingual mind-set of the time had been brought to the forefront of academic discourse, and the need of a more holistic view of the phenomenon had been timidly voiced and set forth. Again, an open recognition to a wide range of variables, which was to lead, years later, to a shift from the subtractive to the additive view of bilingualism (the latter favouring integration and inclusiveness). To the surprise of Tucker and Lambert, reports from all over the world began to reach them with an open and honest recognition of the goodness of their stance (Singapore 1970, Switzerland 1970, Western Canada 1972, Cummins, Gumperz 1982). The positive findings then reported had been due to the application of a multidimensional view of bilingualism rather than a restricted one.

In the 80's, the shift from subtractive to additive bilingualism started to mark the trend of what was to be the academic harvest of the decade. Grosjean (1983) wrote and lectured extensively on the topic and openly expressed his opposition to the monolingual mind-set. Mela Sarkar, commenting on his 1982 book, in 2010, writes:

His 1982 book, *Life with Two Languages*, is considered a classic in the field. It was written at a time when the shadow of "deficit theory" ideas about bilingualism -the idea that being bilingual is a handicap, the received wisdom from the 1920s through the 1970s -still lay over the field. Grosjean shows that we still need to fight against the monolingual mind-set that has long tended to categorize bilingual speakers as somehow different or unusual.

Referring to his background as researcher, she remarks,

[...] Grosjean masters the entire body of scholarly literature on bilingualism produced during the past 100 years. This is no exaggeration. Grosjean has not only read, but also reflected deeply on, everything from the earliest pieces of published research in this area (they date from the 20's of the last century) through to work that came out last year. (Direct reference to the book he published in 2010.) (Sarkar M, "A Bilingual Life." The Montreal Gazette, June 4<sup>th</sup> 2010)

Grosjean believes that, "[...] bilinguals are those who use two or more languages in their everyday life" and he generously shares with his readers and followers the identification criteria he uses when having to identify bilinguals. He recommends paying attention to the following:

Frequency of use of the languages involved on the part of speakers

Fluency in those speakers coming second in order after frequency

NB: He gives dialects and a language equal status, and insists that there may be two or more languages involved.

In 1983/4, Skutnabb-Kangas and Krashen-Terrell, recognized voices in the field, decide to collaborate with the task of identifying bilinguals by proposing descriptors, which directly relate to performance. On the one hand, they make a distinction between acquisition and learning, and on the other, they focus attention on the interrelation among three factors: context, time and people involved in communicative situations.

With respect to acquisition, the context is set by the child's home, the time, by home daily routine, and the people involved, by the child's close family and caretakers. Similarly, with respect to learning, the context is set by the school itself, the time, by programmed school life, and the people involved, by teachers and peers.

According to them, focusing attention on descriptors can help us walk along the identification of bilinguals safely, yet, "as usual, there may be exceptions that have to be taken into account," they say. The very authors cite the case of young learners attending a day care centre or a kindergarten section at a school, and receiving L2 input while they are there, and conclude that at that age, the distinction between

acquisition and learning does not reveal itself clearly. Anyhow, older children, adolescents and adults do conform to the expectations of the descriptors above-mentioned and allow the manifestation of differences under the category of competencies. For instance, someone being able to understand an oral or written message, but not being able to speak or write the language in which the message has been written. From here on, there is room for the display of a large variety of competencies during the acquisition or the learning process. Grosjean (1982), discussing bilinguals' individual performance suggests a parameter, which, in his opinion, adds ease to the task of classifying bilinguals. The parameter he proposes is "language use":

The range of people who can be considered bilingual increases considerably when one concentrates on language use. At one end, we find the migrant worker who may speak with some difficulty the host's country's language and who does not read and write it. At the other end, we have the professional interpreter who is fully fluent in two languages. In between, we find the scientist who reads and writes articles in a second language but who rarely speaks it, the foreign born spouse who interacts with friends in his-her first language, the member of a linguistic minority who uses the minority language only at home and the majority language in all other domains of life, the Deaf person who uses sign language with his-her friends" [...] Despite the great diversity among these people, they all share a common feature: *they lead their lives with two or more languages*.<sup>3</sup> (p. 22)

Baker (1993), in agreement, introduces the notion of language knowledge and language use in bilinguals' performance but first directs attention to the four main abilities; to him they are "the fundamentals of language performance" (a clear reference to classroom teaching and learning).

	Oracy	LiteracyLiteracy
Receptive	Listening	Reading
Productive	Speaking	Writing
Sub dimensions	Pronunciation	
	Grammar/ Meaning/ Style	

<sup>3</sup> Choice of emphasis is ours.